



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge

Planning Update #2 November 2009



This is the second in a series of updates about the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge and development of its Comprehensive Conservation Plan. The purpose of this Planning Update is to give you the opportunity to review and comment on the issues identified during public scoping, the Refuge's draft goal statements, and the preliminary range of management alternatives developed by the planning team.

Thank You for Participating!

Over the past few years, the Bosque del Apache NWR has been gathering both formal and informal comments. Comments were submitted in writing, at public open houses, and by visitors to the refuge. Issues raised by the public included: invasive species management, habitat management including the floodplain, threatened and endangered species management, concerns about migratory birds, public use issues including hunting, impacts of climate change, and fire management.

This second planning update will provide you with the primary management issues and representative comments for each of those issues. This update will also contain the draft goals and preliminary range of alternatives to be considered for management of the Refuge. We extend our sincere appreciation to everyone who has provided comments and we invite you to continue sharing your ideas with us. Your participation continues to be critical to the success of this planning effort.

Thank you

Tom Melanson
Refuge Manager,
Bosque del Apache NWR



*Top, Sandhill cranes in morning fog
Photograph by Wally Newman
Above, Landscape view at Bosque
del Apache NWR.
Photograph by Shawn Gillette*

Steps of the Planning Process

What should we consider?

Identify the Issues

We are here

How can we act on the issues?

Develop Alternatives

How well will each alternative work?

Analyze Alternatives

Which would work best?

Select an Alternative

Public review and comment

Publish Draft Plan

Another chance for public to review and comment

Publish Final Plan

Final decision made public

Publish Record of Decision

Implement Plan and revise as needed

What Are The Key Issues for Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge?

Issue 1: What role will the Refuge play in management of trust resources at the landscape scale?

Individuals expressed concerns about what role the refuge plays within the larger landscape. The refuge would like to take a landscape-scale approach to managing the refuge, addressing issues like climate change, Rio Grande Instream Flow, and Black Gramma Grasslands. Issues regarding the Rio Grande floodplain include fire management due to large fuel loads; commitment of Refuge-derived water to the river at certain times of the year; sediment/sand plugs movement; potential river channel movement; and questions about coordinating or even amending agreements with Federal and State agencies to alter water flow quantities.

Representative Comment:
“We believe the CCP should focus on recreating and restoring natural processes as much as possible, including rehabilitation of wildlife habitat, restoring watercourses, reintroducing wild land fire regimes, and preventing/mitigating climate change impacts.”

Issue 2: How will the Refuge manage habitats to ensure the conservation of trust resources?

Members of the general public and the planning team expressed concerns about the management of the active floodplain, which is not currently being managed. Invasive plant species, such as the salt cedar, threaten the bio-diversity and health of the floodplain, but also serve as nesting habitat for the Southwestern willow flycatcher. There are concerns regarding the ability to continue farming for food production versus wetland vegetation yield as a food source. Also, providing food for sandhill cranes is leading to an increase in populations of snow geese.

Representative Comment:
“We applaud and support salt cedar eradication methods and projects on the Refuge.”

Issue 3: How will the Refuge manage for wildlife?

Members of the general public and the planning team commented on the management of wildlife on the Refuge. Comments about both migratory species and resident species were raised. Migratory waterfowl, sandhill cranes, shorebirds, and neotropical migrants all reside on the refuge during their migration route. There are concerns about what seems like conflicts between

the Refuge's purpose—to establish habitat for migrating waterfowl—and habitat needs for some threatened and endangered species, including the meadow jumping mouse and silvery minnow.

Representative Comment:
“Bosque del Apache serves as a major federal refuge in New Mexico providing waterfowl, sandhill crane, shorebird and migratory neotropical bird habitat. The Department encourages the refuge to continue in this role and supports habitat improvements on the refuge.”

Issue 4: How will the Refuge manage public use opportunities while ensuring protection of fish, wildlife, and their habitats?

Members of the general public and the planning team identified several important issues related to the continued protection of Refuge resources and quality wildlife dependent recreation activities. Concerns were raised about the volume and actions of some during the busy winter season, particularly disturbance/harassment of the cranes, snow geese, and other waterfowl due to pedestrian activity, bicycle traffic, and off-leash dogs. Because of decreasing off-Refuge habitat, migrating waterfowl are spending more time on the Refuge and thus increasing exposure time to disturbances by visitors, resulting in less time spent foraging and more time reacting to human-caused disturbances.

Draft Refuge Vision Statement

The Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge will be a model for management and conservation of the natural diversity of native plants and animals representative of the Middle Rio Grande valley of New Mexico, preserving cultural resources, and providing opportunities for research, environmental education and quality wildlife-dependent outdoor recreation. The Refuge will link other wildlands with vital habitat for threatened and endangered species, migratory birds, and resident wildlife and other natural resources of the Rio Grande watershed and the Chihuahuan desert. The Refuge will serve as a resilient source of evolving habitats and ecosystem processes even as structure and composition are altered do to climate changes. Conservation and restoration of the natural health and beauty of the Refuge is the Service's promise to the community and future generations.

Representative Comment:
“Please cut more “viewing windows” in the coyote willows so we have a better chance to see what birds are using the ponds.”

Issue 5: How will the Refuge manage infrastructure to best accomplish Refuge purposes?

Individuals have concerns regarding refuge facilities. Some roads, and both visitor services infrastructure

and administrative infrastructure need to be repaired or updated. Greening infrastructure to help mitigate the impacts of climate change is needed for refuge buildings.

Representative Comment:
“Our vision to fulfill NWRS mission is adequate funding, adequate water levels, improved infrastructure, and scientific surveys on which to base management plans.”



Photography is very popular at Bosque del Apache NWR.
Photograph by Jerry Goffe

Bosque del Apache *National Wildlife Refuge Planning Update #2*

Issue	Alternative A: Current Mgmt / No Action	Alternative B	Alternative C
<i>What role will the Refuge play in the management of trust resources at the landscape scale?</i>			
Rio Grande Instream Flow (June 15 thru October 15)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No transfer of irrigation water to the Rio Grande 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transfer irrigation water to Rio Grande 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purchase water rights from outside Refuge for Rio Grande
Black Gramma Grasslands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No current management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prescribed fire to reduce woody vegetation and restore grasses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt “B” plus allow wildfires to burn on Refuge and adjacent lands (BLM, private, WSMR)
Climate Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No current management direction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather baseline data with educational institution support Monitoring station with National Phenology Network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. “B”
<i>How will the Refuge manage habitats to ensure the conservation of trust resources?</i>			
Upland Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mimic natural processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. “A” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. “A”
Rio Grande Active Floodplain Management			
Channelization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimal widening of existing channel Minimal sandbar clearance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase existing channel widening Increased sandbar clearance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Realign channel to historic locations
Rio Grande Historic Floodplain Management			
Historic Floodplain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Riparian, Wetland and Upland restoration Agricultural production 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. “A” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. “A”
Cropland Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooperative farming 260 acres in corn 1100 acres in alfalfa 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refuge Farming (Force Account) 260 acres in corn Remaining acreage (?) placed into another agricultural crop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refuge Farming (Force Account) 260 acres of corn Remaining agricultural acreage (?) placed into a wetlands/uplands rotation
Moist Soil Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Soil disturbance: disk-ing, tilling, ripping, knifing Seasonal herbaceous management: mowing and flooding Water management: timed flood up and draw down Fire: debris removal from ditches/drains, cycle nutrients, prepare impoundments, exotics removal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. “A” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. “A”

Bosque del Apache *National Wildlife Refuge Planning Update #2*

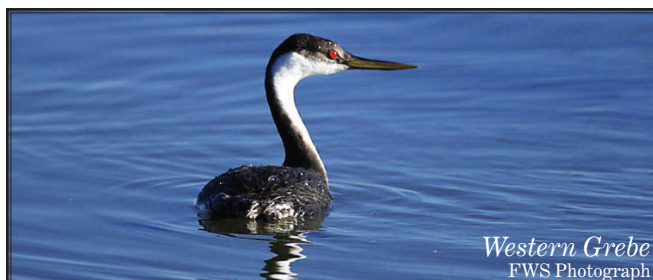
Issue	Alternative A: Current Mgmt / No Action	Alternative B	Alternative C
Rio Grande Active & Historic Floodplain Management			
Riparian Forest Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Periodic flooding with existing channel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Periodic flooding with modified channel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. "B"
Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with water management community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. "A" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. "A"
Water Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water movement Control structures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. "A" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. "A"
Fire Management			
Prescribed Burns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fuels reduction and manipulation Pile burning Prescribed burns in Wilderness Areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. "A" plus conduct understory broadcast burns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. "B"
Wildfires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suppress unplanned wildfires in all wilderness areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow wildfires to burn in all wilderness areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. "B"
<i>How will the Refuge manage for wildlife?</i>			
Migratory Species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1,946 acres seed producing grasses / perennial vegetation 250 acres semi-permanent wetlands 340 acres mixed grain agriculture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. "A" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. "A"
Resident Species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage diverse aquatic, mesic, xeric habitats New Mexico Meadow Jumping Mouse census / habitat determination Western Diamondback Rattlesnake life history study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. "A" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. "A"
Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NM Dept of Game & Fish US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) US Bureau of Reclamation (USBOR) US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District (MRGCD) Universities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. "A" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. "A"

Bosque del Apache *National Wildlife Refuge Planning Update #2*

Issue	Alternative A: Current Mgmt / No Action	Alternative B	Alternative C
<i>How will the Refuge manage public use opportunities while ensuring protection of fish, wildlife, and their habitats?</i>			
Dogs On-leash on Auto Tour / Wildlife Drive during Peak Season	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dogs allowed on-leash out of vehicle on auto tour year round 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt "A" plus Roving volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No dogs allowed out of vehicle on auto tour / wildlife drive during peak season Roving volunteers
Conflicts between User Groups at Observation Decks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No defined "group" size SU Permit groups required to attend mandatory Refuge Orientation session 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same As Alt. "A" plus Law Enforcement Officers presence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish "group" size Limit number of groups and group size during peak season
Hunt Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large game in designated areas Small game in designated areas Light geese in designated areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. "A" plus Evaluate feasibility of providing additional hunt opportunities, to include new species in expanded designated areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. "B"
Increase Public Use Opportunities in Summer Months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monthly educational series Auto tour Visitor Center Fishing / Frogging Hiking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. "A" plus Interpretive programs Summer camps Special events Formal interpretive hikes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. "B"
Tree Cutting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Special Use Permits to harvest salvaged wood Special Use Permits to cut Cottonwood/Salt Cedar poles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. "A" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. "A"
Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Friends of Bosque del Apache NWR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. "A" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. "A"
Windows in Vegetation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate number and size of view windows on Wildlife Drive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. "A" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. "A"
<i>How will the Refuge manage infrastructure to best accomplish Refuge purposes?</i>			
Visitors Services Infrastructure			
Roadways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing, limited signage on NM 1 Unit 11 pullout on west side of NM 1 55 mph Speed Limit signs on NM 1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional warning signs on NM 1 for deer crossing, people on highway, railroad crossing, no stopping on roadway Move Unit 11 pullout to eastside of NM 1 45 mph Speed Limit signs on NM 1 Increase parking capacity at Visitor Center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. "B"

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Issue	Alternative A: Current Mgmt / No Action	Alternative B	Alternative C
<i>How will the Refuge manage infrastructure to best accomplish Refuge purposes? (continued)</i>			
Visitors Services Infrastructure (continued)			
Visitor Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing Visitor Center in Refuge HQ Building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build new Environmental Education / Visitors Center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. "B"
Exhibits and Signs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing Visitor Center exhibits Existing wayside exhibits Seven observation decks Existing signs No "Welcome/Orientation" kiosks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renovate Visitor Center exhibits Rebuild existing and add wayside exhibits Reconstruct seven observation decks Add signs Build "Welcome/Orientation" kiosk at south boundary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. "B"
Rio Grande Trail Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Route follows NM 1 and northern boundary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. "A" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. "A"
Hiking Trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-paved trail Restored annually after floods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. "A" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. "A"
Administrative Infrastructure			
Refuge Headquarters /	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7 existing offices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase office spaces into areas previously used as Visitor Center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. "B"
Bunkhouse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standard, temporary building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replace with "Green" building Build additional "Green" bunkhouse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. "B"
Shop Buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two motor shop buildings One fire shop building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand motor shop buildings to create more storage space Expand fire shop building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. "B"
Greening Efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purchase hybrid-fueled vehicles Install solar power panels on building roofs Recycling program Use of and install solar-powered water heaters in buildings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. "A" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alt. "A"



Draft Refuge Goals

Goal 1. Wildlife Habitat and Population Management

Protect and enhance, through conservation, restoration, and management, wildlife habitat for native species and natural diversity representative of the Rio Grande watershed and Chihuahuan desert; including special status species, migratory waterbirds, neotropical migrants, and other resident wildlife.

Goal 2. Research and Demonstration

Provide management-based arid lands research opportunities and serve as a demonstration area where innovative land management techniques are developed, implemented and showcased. Findings will be transferred through site visits, workshops, reports, and publications.

Goal 3. Visitor Services

Provide Refuge visitors opportunities for safe, high quality, compatible, wildlife-dependent public use and recreation with an emphasis on environmental education, interpretation, wildlife observation, photography, hunting, and fishing, to promote understanding, appreciation, and support for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's mission.

Goal 4. Wilderness

Preserve and protect the wilderness character of those refuge lands designated by Congress as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System.

Goal 5. Cultural Resources Management and Protection

Protect, preserve, and interpret cultural resources in compliance with established Acts.

Goal 6. Improvement of Staffing and Funding

Develop and implement a comprehensive refuge program, including providing sufficient staff, training, facilities, equipment, volunteers, and partnerships to protect and manage the natural, cultural, and historical resources.

*Snow geese and Chupadera
Mountains at Bosque del Apache
NWR.*

Photograph by Jana Svobodova



Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan Coming Soon

Over the next year, the planning team will be preparing the draft Plan/EA. The draft document will provide a detailed analysis of the management alternatives presented in this update.

The planning team anticipates that the draft Plan/EA will be available for public review and comment in Summer 2011. After public review and comment of the draft document, including public meetings, a Final Plan and decision document will be prepared and distributed.

Let us know what you think and please help us keep our mailing list updated.

____ (Yes) Keep me on your mailing list/add me to your mailing list

Please specify in which form you would like to receive a copy of the draft plan for review.

____ Electronic (CD) ____ Hardcopy

____ (No) Take me off your mailing list.

Name: _____
(Please Print)

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____

If you are acting in an official capacity as the representative of an organization please complete the following two items.

Organization: _____

Title: _____

Please note that names on our mailing list and any submitted comments become part of the public record for this project. The Service must release names, if requested, under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act of 1974.

Thank you for your time!



Bosque del Apache *National Wildlife Refuge Planning Update #2*

For any comments or concerns, contact:

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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
<http://www.fws.gov>

All photographs, USFWS

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National Wildlife Refuge System Mission

"...to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans"

(National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, Public Law 105-57).

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**Place
Stamp
Here**